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UNCLAS ABUJA 001373

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR G/TIP

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SUBJECT: HEAD OF TRAFFICKING AGENCY DISCUSSES NIGERIAN
ANTI-TIP EFFORTS

REF: ABUJA 573

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. NOT FOR PUBLICATION ON THE
INTRANET OR INTERNET.

1. (SBU) Summary. In a courtesy call on the Ambassador, Nigeria's anti-trafficking agency discussed its work during its first year of existence, gave the status of two prosecutions underway in Kano, described the horrors of the overland trafficking in persons (TIP) route north through the Sahara, and talked of the difficulty of winning trafficking convictions. Lacking any high-profile convictions or even prosecutions, the agency is fighting an uphill battle. End Summary.

2. (U) On the morning of August 4, the Ambassador received a courtesy call from three officials from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP): Executive Secretary Mrs. Carol Nduguba, Head of Public Awareness Mr. Arinze Orakwue, and Head of Prosecution Mr. Haruna. The request for the NAPTIP courtesy call arrived from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the day after Mrs. Nduguba missed a meeting of NAPTIP officials with G/TIP and AF/W officials in July.

3. (U) The NAPTIP team began by listing Nigeria's successes against TIP. Nigeria is the only country in Africa with a specific law against TIP, they said, and a specific agency set up to fight it. Mrs. Nduguba went on to discuss many of the same things the NAPTIP staff had discussed with the G/TIP team on July 23.

4. (SBU) Mrs. Nduguba mentioned that NAPTIP's one-year anniversary would be August 8, but due to scheduling problems, they expected to have a ceremony in October instead. She invited the Ambassador to the ceremony, and he accepted.

5. (U) While the discussion covered much of the same ground as previous talks with different officials in different settings, there were some noteworthy items. For example, Mrs. Nduguba discussed the role of Kano, in northern Nigeria, as both a route and a resource for trafficking overland, through the Sahara, to Morocco and on to Spain. She described the Sahara crossing as nightmarish, with repeated rapes common, and a survival rate of 5-6 members out of a group of 30 not unusual.

6. (U) Mrs. Nduguba also talked about two prosecutions underway in Kano, along with the difficulty of pursuing TIP cases. In order to win convictions, courts require the testimony of the trafficking victims, who often would rather not be repatriated to Nigeria. Nigerian law provides for very few non-bailable offenses, so the two wealthy defendants in the Kano cases were both quickly released on bail.

7. (U) Also, victims are intimidated by juju, an indigenous religious practice. "Juju men," self-appointed witch doctors, swear the trafficked persons to oaths of silence, the violation of which would result in disease, disfigurement, death, or some other dire outcome. Mr. Haruna said that one juju man had been arrested, but it was very difficult to convince victims to violate their juju oaths and testify.

8. (SBU) Comment. While the NAPTIP team seems sincere and motivated, there are persistent rumors of senior state government officials' involvement in TIP. If NAPTIP were to bring forward a high-profile case against a senior official, it would have a major impact in public awareness of the issue. End Comment.
CAMPBELL